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Musings

OF A

Bachelor

OR

The Farmer Poet

BY

ROBERT A. RIDDIC

WITH INTRODUCTION AND

BY MAJ. JOHN W.

Author of History of North

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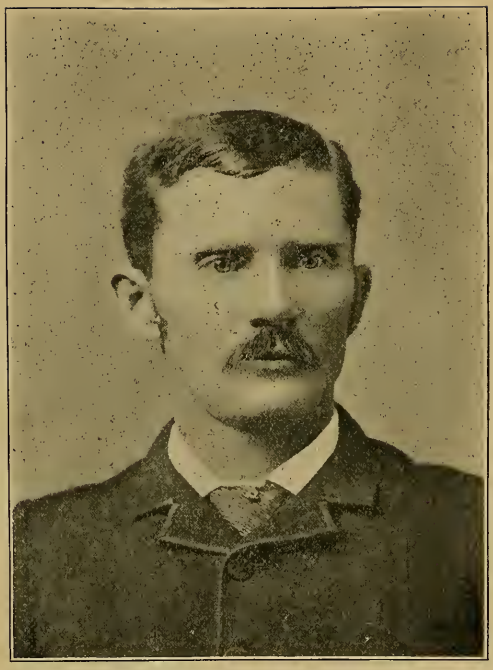
ERRATA.

In preface, read *acknowledgments* for acknowledgements.
On page 9, read *Briton* for Brition.
On page 13, read *statesmen* for statesman.
On page 26, read *exquisitely* for exquisitly, and, in same piece, read *why* for who, and *such* for such such.
On page 27, 1st line, read *yon* for you.
On page 28, read *manner* for manners.
On page 29, read *acrostic* for acroxcic.
On page 30, read *sprites* for spirits.
On page 38, read *'twas the end of the war* for 'twas the war.
On page 43, first line, read *The* for She.
On page 44, read *save* for saves and *snakes* for snake.
On page 47, read *glossy* for flossy,
On page 48, read *judgment* for judgement.
On page 49, read *crawl'd* for craw'd.
On page 53, read *fallen* for failen.
On page 61, read *villain* for villian.
On page 62, read *judgment* for judgement.
On page 65, read *grandeur* for granduer.
On page 74, read *confabulate* for fabulate.
On page 76, read *bnt trash* for trash.
On page 77, read *nonentities* for nonenties.
On page 83, read *did affirm* for did not affirm.
On page 94, read *fish* for first.
On page 102, read *name* for names.



ROBERT A. RIDDICK.

MUSINGS OF A BACHELOR;

OR,

THE FARMER POET,

BY

ROBERT A. RIDDICK.

WITH INTRODUCTION AND THREE POEMS

BY MAJ. JOHN W. MOORE,
Author of History of North Carolina.

RALEIGH:
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TO

MRS. N. H. COX,

THIS LITTLE BOOK IS TENDERLY INSCRIBED

BY HER SON, THE AUTHOR.

In Exchange
Univ. of North Carolina
SEP 27 1933

PREFACE.

"'Tis pleasant sure to see one's name in print,
A book's a book although there's nothing in't."

In putting this little book before the public, I wish to say that it has been written, with the exception of a few pieces, during the leisure intervals of my five years stay as bachelor on the farm. And, moreover, let me say that its pages will not be found to be filled either with the sayings of a wise man, or with the beauties of a real poet; but, on the contrary, with those crudities which usually emanate from the brain of one of the plainest of all men—the farmer.

If, however, my rude attempts but afford pleasure and entertainment to the child, or serve sometimes to give an hour's rest to the tired mind of the scholar, then my humble efforts will not have been entirely in vain.

In my allusion, in one or two instances, to the depravity of man, I did not mean to embrace all—for there are thousands who are kind and humane—but simply had reference to the vicious and the mean.

With the foregoing acknowledgements, I leave the booklet in the hands of its readers, begging that they be charitable in their criticisms, and that they withhold any punishment which, however much it may be deserved, I should hate to endure.

The Introduction and Poems by Maj. John W. Moore need no encomium at my hands. They will speak for

P18004

themselves. Our people are too well acquainted with the masterly manner in which he treats a subject for me to attempt even to eulogize what he has written for this little work. He is as a speaker, "if not first, in the very first line;" and, as a writer phenomenally gifted. "He touches nothing which he does not adorn."

In the hope that my plain avowal may screen me from cruel judgment, I remain, with sincere good wishes,

R. A. RIDDICK.

Ahoskie, April, 1899.

INTRODUCTION

"Heig-ho! what will happen next?" I hear some critic say as he first beholds this work. What can a North Carolina farmer have to say in the way of poetry? It was from just such wiseacres that similar remarks issued when young John Keats began his short and glorious career as a poet. Gifford, with his merciless strictures, could wound the sensitive young man to death, but could not change the world's verdict that another heavenly singer had arisen. The Scotch Reviewers had only sneers for Lord Byron until he pilloried them in immortal verse. Such men, too, essayed to patronize and depreciate Burns, until between their ill-natured patronage and that of the government, they broke his brave spirit. Just as

> "Wealth and fame from no condition rise,
> Act well thy part, there all the honor lies,"

so, too, the gift of poesy belongs to no class, region, or era of time. It is as wide as the world and enduring as eternity. It stirred in the heart of Adam when his eyes first looked out on Paradise, and it will sweeten and exalt humanity through those vast aeons of our lives beyond the grave. As well may we wonder that the birds pour out their souls in song, as that the human heart should go silent through life with sentiments of love and gratitude out-welling to God for the mercies and blessings so abundantly bestowed upon the least fortunate of the human species.

The divine, historian, jurist, and philosopher have no higher sanction for their work. Indeed, it is generally conceded by cultivated people that among mere human employments the very highest and rarest is this divine gift of song. The wise old Roman sang in the dead past, "*Orator fit, poeta nascitur*," which, being intepreted, reads, "The orator is made, the poet, born." It was then Horace's belief that the great declaimers are the handiwork of teachers; but on the other hand the poet's inspiration must be the gift of God. The school, together with diligent application, can take the boy of good mental grasp and make almost anything of him it may be desired, except in this enchanted land of fantasy. It is locked fast against the approach of all intruders who lack nature's original beauty. Then, too, this gift is like angel visits. Very few men and women in the world's history have had their lips touched by live coals from the altar of Parnassus. If this be true, then what right has a man who feels the throes of soul which prompt him to their expression in verse to refuse compliance? What if he fail to "awake to ecstasy the living lyre?" He can yet, if he loves truth and beauty, lift a voice in their commendation that may prove of lasting benefit. Who can estimate the joy and profit of the myriads who have mingled their smiles and tears as they have read and sung the simple and deathless hymns of Dr. Isaac Watts?

As poetry comes next to music as the exposition of the soul, so, too, it combines an utterance of such thought as cannot be well voiced in mere prose. When King David gave vent to his overflowing gratitude to God in the 23d Psalm, how else could he have given appropriate expression to his thought and emotion but in the glowing imagery

of his verse, wedded to suitable music of his harp? There are a few souls so contracted and deformed that in their want of development they can feel no love for nor interest in the very noblest of all poems. They would have turned in disgust from Homer when, in his blindness, he wandered from city to city, reciting the lines of his immortal Iliad. They see no more beauty in the splendors of our glorious sunsets than if God had given neither tint nor outline to the cloudlands. Deaf to the grandest harmonies of the great musical composers, they turn with disgust from all paintings and sculptures. A big barn is their beau-ideal in architecture, and they go through life deaf and blind to the myriad beauties in sights and sounds which God intended for human instruction and delight.

Such reflections have induced the author of this volume to publish the little poems contained in this book. They have occupied and amused his leisure hours, and, I trust, will serve a similar office to any kindly reader in whose hands they may fall. Making no pretension to any beauty or excellence in the little book, he gives it to the public, hoping it will serve his readers as the book has served him in its composition, and thus help them to pass some odd hour not given to more important uses.

Our people are not abreast with the civilized world in their love for books. North Carolina has given poor encouragement to literary work in her borders. When Walter Page went to Raleigh and established a paper that reflected honor upon the whole commonwealth, they had so little appreciation of the man and the opportunity that, after a brief struggle, he abandoned his native State and took his shining talents off to a more congenial latitude.

New York and Boston have delighted in doing him honor, and now, after editing the *New York World* and other great journals, he is in conduct of the *Atlantic Monthly*, the leading literary periodical of the Western Continent. Our people seem to take little interest in matters literary, and alas! that it should be confessed, we contain the next greatest percentage of ignorance of any State in the Union. One alone surpasses us in this "bad eminence," as Milton would call it. No people exist who are more just, peaceful, and patriotic than ours; but their ingrained conservatism binds them to old habits and ideas, and only by slow degrees and multiplied demonstrations of better things can they be induced to forego creeds outworn, and practices abandoned everywhere else by civilized men. There are whole sections of our State where the insane opposition to all railways can yet be found as firmly rooted as when the old Raleigh and Gaston and Wilmington and Weldon railroads were the only routes built in the State, and they well nigh on the point of ruin for want of support among our people. An Eastern man was requested to pledge himself as hostile to all railroads before he could hope as a candidate to receive the votes of our people and thus represent them in the Legislature at Raleigh. These same railroads have created here in America the greatest nation in all the world, and, but for them, the empire which we possess beyond the Mississippi would still be peopled only by a few straggling bands of Indians.

If education is the chief defense of nations, it becomes the duty of every one to contribute whatever is possible to this end. Both as Christians and patriots, it behooves us all to do our part in discharging a debt we owe unto God and

our neighbor. It was quaint Sir Thomas Brown who declared, "I cannot condemn a man for ignorance, but behold him with as much pity as I do Lazarus. It is no greater charity to clothe his body than to apparel the nakedness of his soul." The author of any book, however small, which contains matter that is true and wholesome, assuredly does something toward this end. He is a schoolmaster in a small way, and his readers become his pupils and beneficiaries just so far as he conforms to the true, the good, and the beautiful. Where else, except in our Saviour's discourses, were the duties we owe to God and man so beautifully set forth as in the poetry of David? In what degree did Milton or Wordsworth, and in our day Alfred Tennyson, fall behind the greatest preachers in the purity and truth of their teaching?

It was the dictum of a very great and wise man that the ballads and folk-lore of any people do more to color their times and history than all the statutes enacted by the statesman. It is impossible to realize in our day and generation how the old ballad of Chevy Chase prolonged and embittered the hatred which through centuries of unavailing warfare kept England and Scotland separate nationalities, and kept alive the senseless hatred long after both countries had been ruled by the same king. It was in the same spirit that a sturdy old Brition of the last century thanked God that he had no prejudices, but added that he was free to confess that from the bottom of his heart he despised the sight of a Frenchman. The man with purity in his soul rises far above the horizon of such wicked

puerility, and it is a part of his mission in this world to sing and recommend a day of better things.

"The steamship and the railway and the thoughts that shake mankind"

have of late largely triumphed over such wicked and childish perversions of that charity that should be found dominating the lives of every Christian people. The man who, in those far off ancient days, went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and on the way fell among thieves, was even then fortunate enough to find succor at the hands of a stranger too wise and just to follow such ignoble promptings! As God has made of one blood all the nations of the world, even so are those of every race and region to be counted our neighbors.

With such a polity among the nations, how Arcadian would human life become! How infinitely better than our present habit of wasting hundreds of millions every year on armies and armaments for one Christian people to protect itself against another!

As poetry in its highest office becomes prophetic, no man of common endowments should fail to see and acknowledge its importance in the world. In fact, with all the beauty and perfection of our Lord's teachings, Christians have remained largely blind to the blessings of those who can appreciate the overflowing beauty of God in the way He has decorated the visible works of His creation. How dare we to be blind to the glories of the lilies? "Behold they toil not, neither do they spin, yet I say unto you that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." Does the dull utilitarian know what was meant by our Saviour when he asked, "Is not the life more than meat and

the body more than raiment?" Shall we strip existence of all its significance and delights and bow down to the false gods carved out by greed and selfishness? The spirit that is attuned to the highest harmonies walks on like the lady in Comus. Amid scenes of fearful danger, she was yet secure, telling the Prince of revelers that God

> "Would send a glistening guardian if need were
> To keep her life and honor unassailed."

It has been long the habit of Europeans to sneer at Americans, and charge them with possessing no higher ideals than the mere accumulation of money. It is a sad thing to confess that a large proportion of our people are amenable to such criticism. It is true that now and then we find noble exceptions to this humiliating rule, and they, we are proud to say, are mostly found in our own Southland. Beyond the Potomac, the fashion loving classes are most wholly found among the wealthy parvenues who take great pains to erect barriers against the intrusion of any person who may not carry as long a purse and spend money with the same ostentation as practiced among themselves. They have come to regard Newport as so exclusively their property that they regard the presence of visitors outside of their own set as that of some presumptuous and blundering idiot in thus daring to violate the haunt sacred to the elite. Such people are buying up and appropriating to similar uses some of the most lovely and charming retreats to be found in the Republic. Men like President McKinley and Mr. Speaker Reed can, on proper invitation and with consent given by proper authority in the club owning Jekyl Island, visit that once popular resort and be treated like

Christian people are in the habit of extending to even the wayfaring stranger who asks shelter for the night. But now, instead of gay multitudes seeking health and happiness as of old, these rich exclusives have the beach patrolled, and the unwelcome millions are told that their presence is in no way desired. This unamiable and unchristian spirit of the American Nabobs was lately exemplified very conspicuously by Mr. William Waldorf Astor. He has lately come in possession of a noble country seat in the vicinity of London. It had been, before he assumed control, a great show place, and was visited by delighted thousands, who loved to wander through its noble park and gardens. Even its art treasures had been in conformity with the habit of the English nobility, open at times to the inspection of decent strangers of every nationality; but Mr. Astor, like his republican friends at home, soon built lofty fences around his grounds, and shutting his doors against all the world outside the charmed circle, he thinks worthy of seeing the beauty of his park and drive-ways.

These wealthy people who have become so rich and powerful that they can thus seem to despise public opinion and to feel no need of the kindly feeling and friendly offices of the community at large are carrying themselves into ways that are full of evil portents for the future. Not content with so many exhibitions of their disregard for the masses, they have found means to control Congress, Legislatures, and the Courts, and to put the great bulk of the enormous public expenses upon the poor people, and to exempt themselves from a large share of taxes levied. The government had taxed incomes for many years with the full assent of our Federal Supreme Court until, reversing the decisions of

a century, these rich people hired lawyers who could persuade the Court to go back on all its precedents, and one of them not three months old, and thus deliver thousands of millions of wealth from all participation in support of the government. Do such men forget that this very government was not only the means of their accumulation and the only hope of its security? Will they extort and oppress and corrupt until public patience has perished and the people rise in their might to secure justice? No king has yet lived who dared to oppress too far men of Anglo-Saxon blood. They hate revolution, and reverence the decrees of their courts until they lose hope of truth and justice in their decisions. With so fell a consummation the day of reckoning as surely comes as night doth follow day. It may be that entrenched wealth may trust in the big armies that are being enrolled as bridles to restrain the people's ire, but such hope is vain. Either our statesman will pause and retrace their mistaken paths, or there must be a halt in these outrages upon the masses. Red-handed anarchy and bloodshed will be the sequel otherwise.

"Heigho! Give us a rest!" I hear you say again, Mr. Critic. What do you say about the connection between poetry and statecraft, and their relations to the people? Surely the poet owes the same obligation of patriotism as do other men, and have you never read Plato's discourse on immortality, where he related what Socrates said to his friends as they surrounded his beloved form and heard the last utterances of that wonderful man who was, by general consent, the wisest and best of those immortal heroes that made Greece so famous? He told them the first obligation every man owes to his son is to teach him music. The

paragon of patriots maintained that a man's love of his native land is thereby created and confirmed. In those ancient days, too, before the coming of our Lord, the heathen philosopher made patriotism and obedience to his government the beginning and largely the substance of true religion. To him, too, music and poetry were synonymous terms. The poets, following the example of blind old Homer, went from town to town reciting or singing their compositions. These, like the Iliad and Odyssey, were stories in verse, which told of the deeds and sayings of heroes and kings. The genius of man has yet failed to create any epic to surpass the Iliad. Its sustained greatness in depicting incidents and character, its wonderful grouping and arrangement, and the steady evolution of the fatal quarrel amid the Greek chiefs, are told in a way as delightful to men of our day as they were three thousand years ago.

Thus one may, in all reason, claim that the poet's mission, far from being like that of some butterfly of summer, is full of the highest significance and benefit to the world at large. It transcends mere material and remunerative callings, just in the same ratio that all things spiritual and intellectual transcend the clods of the valley. It is very true that our bodies are the temples of the soul and should be kept fit for the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, and the soul is like some lighted lamp that sends radiance to its opaque enclosure. How all important that the light which thus we afford should be bright and of sweet odor!

In this world our lives are largely colored by our own individual purposes and ideals. It is true that none of us is strong enough or wise enough to deliver our soul from all the effects of circumstance and environment. God has

so made us that we are largely each other's keepers. Then, too, we are told by the greatest of the poets that a wise man

> "Finds tongues in trees, books, and running brooks,
> Sermons in stones, and good in everything."

Then let us beware how we are to be influenced ourselves, and yet again be still more alert as to what other people may suffer by reason of mistakes and faults incurred by influences for which we can be held liable. Human life at best is so short that, for good or evil, it can mainly affect the world but for a brief season; but some little books are as undying as the human race, and their influence for good or evil survives through all generations. The Book of Job is said to be the oldest of all the writings which have come down to us from the era wherein the patriarchs lived upon the earth. Yet how pregnant it still remains for the good of mankind! It is thus that the highest and purest motive arises for a country farmer, or any one else who may prove capable to undertake, even in a small and humble way, to leave as a legacy to this and succeeding generations his best thoughts and aspirations. Who shall say how many may be cheered and elevated by his words? No man who loves truth and purity, and impregnates his written works with loving advocacy for their claims upon us, can go without proper reward. His reward may be like bread cast on the water, and be slow in its full fruition, but 'God is just and the justifier of all such as thus put their trust in Him.'

J. W. M.

MUSINGS OF A BACHELOR,

OR

THE FARMER POET.

LINES TO ANNIE RIVES.

(A young lady visitor now at school.)

And here am I whose thoughts delight to be
On her whose form I once was wont to see;
That form withdrawn, endearing thought still cleaves
In vigor to the mem'ry of Annie Rives.

Oh, blest the hour in which the meeting come,
Or where she now resides or at her home!
That shall my eyes in pleasant feasting dwell
On her with that sense the tongue can never tell.

Blest be the time, though distant far away,
That lend to me the soul-bestirring ray;
That ray which glows more softly one believes,
From no other eye as that of Annie Rives.

Pandora, with gifts bountifully given
By gods and goddesses of th' realms of heaven,
Could not have won with all her beauty rare
As lovely a name as thou art doom'd to share.

Can time avenge all sacred pleasures lost,
Efface the scathing thought and painful cost
Of days misspent, of chances unimproved,
And all th' embittered years of a life unloved?

Then unto me such blessings now restore,
And pain my life with sorrows never more;
Give unto me I ask what ne'er deceives—
That glorious gift—the gift of Annie Rives.

March, 1885.

NEPPIE.

(An Acrostic Written for an Album.)

No life on earth, howe'er it may be spent,
Evinces all the joy of full content.
Proud monarchs, tho' o'er earth their sceptres sway,
Philosophers explain, poets portray,
In all the varied callings these beside
E'en in them all there's no one satisfied.

But yet, e'en so, there's still a rich bequest—
A dear companion in whom you feel blest;
Redundant wealth, or richest work of art
Could ne'er such pleasure to the soul impart.
Life's fullest happiness is best obtain'd
In getting that most rarely to be gain'd;
Fair Fortune, then, a kindness will bestow
To give her whose name these initials show.

July 4, 1887.

LINES TO A MISS.

Like bright and lovely flowers
That deck the smiling land,
Or soft and genial showers
On some lone blighted strand;
Like warm and gentle sunbeams
That kiss the sparkling dew,
My life thus always seems
When lit and led by you.

Enraptured by thy presence
All places would prove sweet;
For by fond love's puissance
No power could entreat
Me words uncouth to use,
Or acts unkind to do,
For thus I would abuse
Thy tender heart and true.

The beauty of thy face
The limner's art defies,
No sorrow can erase
The lustre of thine eyes;
The radiance of thy smile,
How beautiful! It seems
A spirit to beguile
My soul to softest dreams.

Amidst life's fairer bowers
May e'er thy lot be cast,
Unshackled by the powers
That strive our hopes to blast;
May God in love look down,
And all thy ways defend,
Send not one angry frown
Thy happiness to end.

Ahoskie, N. C.

THE NIGHT OF MY THIRTY-THIRD ANNIVERSARY.

The sweet thoughts of that night I shall never forget,
With the fondest delight I remember them yet,
And when age will have furrow'd deep lines on my brow
They will still seem as vividly present as now.
As I quietly sat and enjoy'd the hours through,
There was much that was pleasing and charming to view.
Oh, how peacefully calm, how transcendently bright,
Were the things that I saw in the moon's tender light!
The whole earth was suffused: there cannot be a scene
In which there was more lovely, more beautiful sheen.
There sweet perfume of flowers arose to my sense,
Ev'ry bud, ev'ry bloom did an odor dispense;
There the tall tow'ring pines that were standing close by
Seem'd to lift with much grandeur their heads to the sky;
The tall spire of the church, the green leaves of the trees,
The grass-covered lawn, the exhil'rating breeze—
These were some of the charms of that night I recall,
But there's one yet unmention'd, the sweetest of all.

Now the last, now the last—oh, how shall I confer
The encomium that should be given to her?
Unrenowned in song or in rhythmical fame,
I possess not the words to add praise to her name;
The light spirit of Erato I would invite
To preside o'er my mind while I thus try to write.
Unadorned with gold, she in simple attire,
Was the loveliest object I saw to admire;
The soft, ambient light which so lustrously shone
From the far-distant face of that summer night's moon,
Was not lovelier, brighter, more beautiful, true,
Than that which did illume the sweet face of Miss Sue.

Though this date shall repeat in the cycle of years,
Just as surely and truly as sunlight appears,
Yet to me 't will not seem as it did on that night
When all things were enwrapt in such beautiful light:
Not, perhaps, if I'm suffer'd to add on life's page
All the days and the years that make up an old age.
Upon her whose pure life has evoked what I've said
May the sweet dews of heaven be lovingly shed;
Her pure fountain of joy never know any dearth
Till her spirit shall waft 'bove the cares of this earth.

July 30, 1889.

MY LIFE.

My life is like the wounded dove
That falls in solitude to die,
Alone, forgot, bereft of love,
The object of no anxious eye;
Yet on the bird's forlorn estate
Some human care perchance may wait,
Some eye her body bend to see,
But none, alas! will care for me.

My life is like the vernal dawn
That's usher'd in with cloudless light,
But ere the hours of day are gone
Is seen the trace of stormy night;
Yet when the raging storm is o'er,
And howling winds are heard no more,
A deeper calm there seems to be,
But there's no calm, alas! for me.

My life is like the crescent moon
That shines afar with palest ray;
Her light is sinking and how soon
She'll leave the earth and pass away!
But when she's sunk in vaulted tomb,
All nature seems to wear a gloom,
As if it mourn'd her leave to see,
But none, alas! will mourn for me.

November 1889.

CORA LEE.

(Air, "Those Evening Bells.")

When saddest moments o'er me brood,
And thought is lost in sombre mood,
'Tis then I ask one smile to see
Of that sweet girl, fair Cora Lee.

CHORUS.

Sweet Cora Lee, sweet Cora Lee,
With joyous heart I sing of thee,
And ask some guardian angel near
To light thy face from ev'ry tear.

When time, or soon or late, shall take
Away thy presence, then will wake
The pleasing thought that memory
Shall e'er retain a place for thee.

And may earth's sorrows never cloy
Thy present bliss, thy future joy;
But bursts of rapture ever gleam
Upon thy life with brightest beam.

November, 1890.

'TWAS SUNDAY.

The day was second of October,
The breeze was neither warm nor cold,
But gently play'd with fading verdure
As down the track we onward stroll'd;
While streams of light from autumn's sun
Pour'd o'er the scene enjoy'd in fun.

It was a day such as the mind,
In looking back o'er days gone by,
Is wont t'recall with an emotion
As softly sweet as echoes die;
For not e'en hearts of pangs or tears
Forget the joys of tend'rer years.

The scene as I have said was joyful,
Nor cloud nor speck in heaven's serene
Was visible. The great and broad
Expanse of sky was clear and clean;
And in this universe of worlds
The fairest sight was lovely girls.

And they were two: Iola Lee
And Mamie. On and on we went
Till by and by we reach'd the trees;
'Mong them the winds and waters lent
Such soothing tones in length and breve
That I was loath indeed to leave.

We held converse with one another
In words of pleasantry as friends
Are wont to do. And these are times

In which the soul with nature blends,
Dispelling from our minds the care
Which nature never deigns to share.

Said Miss Iola: "Isn't it pretty
In there." And with a gentle move
Her hand directed to the copse
And verdant reeds. Said she: "I love
Not man the less but nature more;"
A sentiment oft heard before.

The words which Mamie spoke were few.
The beautiful and lovely page
Open'd before her seem'd t' absorb
Her livelier self, and to engage
That fervid study which controls
The mind and heart of tranquil souls.

At length we stood upon a bridge
Where flows beneath a gentle stream,
Whose purling music was as sweet
As what we feel in love's first dream;
And on its waves we'd pebbles throw
To watch the circlets come and go.

The brighter rays, now blent into
That glowing red which marks the near
Approach of night, warn'd us we must
Return. With merriment and cheer
We left the bridge, and walk'd us back
O'er our same way upon the track.

October 18, 1892.

LINES TO MARGARET.

(An Acrostic.)

Majestic sweetness, nature's loveliest trace,
Adorns the beauty of thy virgin face;
Retiring and refined it fills with ease
Grim man whose care forbids aught else to please.
A thousand praises exquisitly wrought,
Replete with all with which our words are fraught;
E'en these but poor and idle things would be
To give the praise I'd gladly give to thee.

Hail! happy one, I worship at thy shrine,
And ask the boon Minerva wouldn't resign;
Resolved she was "The Blue-eyed Maid" to live,
Great guardian care was all she sought to give;
Remem'bring thus her tutelary care,
One lover's heart 'twas not her wish to share;
Vain goddess! oh who did she thus decide!
Essay not thou such such course—but be my bride.

April 3, 1893.

THE NIGHT OF MY THIRTY-EIGHTH BIRTHDAY.

The day dreams of my years are past,
Night's visions hover thick and dark;
The stream of life I'm sailing fast
Death's sea t' embark.

These woods, this field, I used to roam,
With playmates who are gone forever,
Will never seem such sacred home
Again, no-never.

And while you moon with softest light
Shines down upon the same old scene,
There's many a thought recurs to-night
Of what has been.

The many mounds 'mong yonder pines
Remind me of my kindred gone;
I sit and think if Fate designs
I live alone.

In life's great book whose lids I ope
To trace if there my doom is given,
I find it not, but there's this hope—
The hope of heaven.

Oh! why should I like others crave
T' extend this feeble span of years,
When there may be within the grave
An end of fears?

The dire conflict will soon be over,
And then earth's scenes no more I'll share;
In the inane I may discover
Why I am here.

"'Tis time this heart should be unmoved,
Since others it hath ceased to move;
Yet though I cannot be beloved,
Still let me love."

Old Home, July 4, 1894.

THE GIRL FOR ME.

If she were sweet and very neat,
A paragon, a charm,
Without deceit, with shapely feet,
And pretty rounded arm;
And if her voice were simply choice,
Her manners always free,
Not with the boys, but to rejoice,
She'd be the girl for me.

And if her hair were dark or fair
That would but little matter,
Just so her air were sweetly rare
I'd dearly love to chat her.
Her symmetry, her mouth, her eye,
If these should perfect be,
Then surely I would breathe this sigh—
You are the girl for me.

If in her face I could but trace
Love's presence and duration,
Nothing should brace me 'gainst the race
Of my love's consummation;
For I would dare her life to share
If she would but agree;
Then I could swear, with love and care,
I'd won the girl for me.

July 22d, 1894.

CLAIRE.

(An Acroxeic in which there is a mistake in the name—the real name being Claire Renshawe Newsome.)

Could grace and beauty in a word be told,
Long had such word—if with me to prepare—
Arisen to my thoughts. I'll not withhold
It, for just trace this line and know 'twere Claire.
Rich and in great exuberance her hair
Encircles gorgeously a noble brow;
No feature harsh to mar her face so fair
She looks a type of loveliness; and now
Her beaus would pay a word of homage for her vow.

And to extol her virtues were a task
Which genius rare alone might undertake.
No countenance like hers could ever mask
Envenom'd breath, or hate such as would make
Within the heart a feeling to forsake.
She seems a favorite, and with a smile
On all her spell of joy will hardly break.
May she live on and no one e'er revile,
E'en jealousy itself should not her name defile.

September 20, 1894.

CHILDISH RECOLLECTIONS.

'Tis with gladsome delight I revert to the scenes
(Even though a great number of years intervenes)
Of my childhood and youth, so replete with the best
And the dearest fond mem'ries with which life is blest.
Happy years! although gone never more to be mine,
Yet my heart your bright picture will ever enshrine.
How I think of the group by the fireside at night,
Seated round in a row by the bright burning light,
Which shone up from the hearth in the face of us all,
Flared over the room and glisten'd on the wall.

With what pleasure the moments our talking beguiled,
When, to mark the strange zest in the mind of a child
Of mysterious things, the old heads would commence
'Bout the things in old houses, and dark forests dense,
Such as goblins, and ghosts, and the great and grim spirits,
And a number of other things children call "frights,"
Until I was uneasy and 'fraid, for, forsooth,
Though a story to them yet I fear'd 'twas the truth.

Thus with fearful forebodings I went to my bed
After my little prayer, "Now I lay me," was said,
And there thro' a window I'd watch the bright eyes
Of the far-away stars as they shone in the skies;
Or in turning my head tow'rd the light of the fire
All the shadows around seemed woefully dire,
Until Morpheus, bless him! would over me peep,
Wave gently his poppies and soothe me to sleep.

But the somnific pow'r of this god of repose
Could not hold in subjection the host of dread foes
That would come in my dreams these sweet hours to molest,
Fill my heart with dismay and disquiet my rest;
For how oft did I call to my mother when she
Would say there was nothing at all after me,
And to quiet my fears from this spell of deep gloom,
Would at once light a lamp and examine the room.

Ah! full well I remember when but a small boy
How I strove with hard licks a cat's life to destroy,
And was told at the time by a servant that he
(The old cat) would come after me sure as could be.
As the criminal's guilt is more sensibly felt
When the law unto him condemnation has dealt,
So this mischief at first but a pastime in fun
Boded evil indeed when I'd found what I'd done.

Not one moment of peace from that hour could I find,
For the thought of the "haunt" was disturbing my mind;
And at last when at night to my bed I must go,
I lay down with a dread as of meeting a foe.
In the slumbers of midnight—that hour still and lone—
I awoke, and could hear a deep, ominous groan;
I looked up at the window, and through it there flew
A great long snaky ghost striped with red and with blue.
"Lordy mercy! Oh Lordy!" I scream'd and I cried,
And if pa had not come to be sure I had died.

There was much to encounter of troubles and fears
All along through the course of my puerile years;
But nothing beside within all the whole course
Scared me in this way save a skeleton horse;
Which appear'd at my bed a long time after that,
And convulsed me with fright as I'd been by the cat.

From the tale of these ghosts, my great dread when a boy,
I shall turn to a theme which affords me more joy;
To a theme which though seen through the mist of long years,
Becomes bright as the mist from the mind disappears;
For the mem'ry at work brings back much we have done,
Whether childish displeasure or sweet childish fun.
With no brother alive, and no white associate,
O'er the fields, down the lanes, with a negro boy mate,
I would go every day in a regular race
To engage in the sport of a grasshopper chase.
When these insects were caught we would thrust them alive
In a hole in the earth with the hope they would thrive;
We'd feed them as we would a fat pig in the sty,
But our feeding was useless—the "pigs" would all die.
What there was in this pastime attracted me so
It would seem very hard for another to know;
But to me 'twas delightful, and e'en now I feel
A remembrance of joy I can never reveal.

But the gay verdant fields which are charmingly grown
O'er with grass, and with plants, and with flowers full blown,
Are at last by cold winter made dreary and bare,
And my pleasure, if any, must come from elsewhere.

Though the rich summer season is past and gone, yet
Its departure occasions but little regret;
For the pleasure I saw during summer's bright heat
Is succeeded by that seen 'mid snows and the sleet.

Seated now by the fire—quite a small, anxious chap—
I am watching some one as he makes me a trap;
When 'tis finish'd I take it, and quickly I go
It to set in a place where I kick off the snow.
Very glad thus to see where a spot of earth's shown,
Many sparrows and snowbirds soon hither have flown,
And when lured by the bait they're so anxious to eat
One is presently captured, and oh what a treat!
Now this wee little bird, whom to catch I have toil'd,
Being carefully drest on the coals he is broil'd,
And so dainty the taste, so savory and sweet,
My conviction still is he's the sweetest of meat.

Of the rabbits, also, I must something relate,
They contributed much to my fun at this date,
Not exactly, howe'er, at this date, be it known,
For with these I began when a boy larger grown.
Now to capture the rabbits I had a round gum
With a door at one end into which they could come;
And the gum being set at a muse in the fence,
Mister Bun comes along and the turnip-top scents.
His olfactory sense being much gratified,
To investigate further he saunters inside;
Going now to the end for the dainty repast

He trips the door-prop, the door falls and he's fast.
Bright and early next morn to the gum I repair,
Looking in at the door I observe the old hare;
And am glad, very glad at the game I have caught,
Yet though surely my rabbit is scarce worth a groat.

During warm sunny days, oh, how oft I have been
With my father to angle for perch and red-fin,
And beneath the cool shade overhanging the run
We have stood and enjoyed this fishery fun.
Greatly pleased I was too when my father would take
Up his gun for a hunt, and for company's sake
Let me follow. The pleasure was great when his aim
Satisfied my fond wish by his killing the game.
Thus by going with him, and with others also,
Many a spot was endear'd, whither thoughts daily go;
And those places e'en now, if by chance them I see,
Are reminders at once of how things used to be.

O how oft does fond mem'ry those child-walks review,
"And every loved spot which my infancy knew;"
How oft do I think of those woody alcoves
Where honeysuckles grew 'mid the deep tangled groves,
Through whose shade I have roved with the plantation boys
To gather this fruit which the farm-child enjoys.
And how pleasant always was the sweet music made
By the clear trilling notes of the birds in the shade,
And how pleasantly sad and how very acute
Is the thought of the sound of the old sourwood flute,
Which some boy with a "barlow" was certain to make.
And to blend with the bird-songs its resonant shake.

Now before I complete this dull section of rhyme
Just a word let me add on the joyous old time
When we boys roam'd the fields, about twenty abreast,
To find in the broom-straw a partridge's nest.
Memory! thou art wonderful! strange! from thy train
Of things past thou dost give either pleasure or pain!
When beclouded with care, and there's nothing to charm,
It is pleasant to think of the scenes on the farm:
The plentiful harvest of ripe, yellow corn
Which was annually gather'd to fill the large barn;
The full houses of fodder packed up in thick walls
For the mules and the horses that ate in the stalls;
The large crop of potatoes, the cotton-fields white,
And the pickers who'd bring up full baskets at night;
And the fat heavy hogs, with a snore and a grunt,
In their laziness lay, as is always their wont.
On the pen I would sit, and look in at this sight,
Which afforded me daily a share of delight;
And the day of their butch'ry I hail'd with much joy,
For to me 'twas enjoyment unmix'd with alloy.
To the calves in the lawn, to the cows at the gate,
To the oxen who tugg'd under loads of great weight,
To the rest of the herd, or in field or in wood,
To them all fancy flies in the happiest mood.
And the sheep, with their nude, slender legs, I see now
Just as though it had been but a few days ago;
Their bright eyes, crooked horns, and their long shaggy fleece,
Impress'd me with some thoughts time will never efface;
There was something 'bout them which I very much fear'd,
For I thought they seem'd ghostly, unnat'ral, and weird;

And 'twas often the case when I lay fast asleep
I would think in my dreams of the ugly old sheep.
There were chickens and turkeys and guineas and geese,
Puddle-ducks and muscovies all over the place;
And the pigeons would coo in their holes in the shed,
On the houses they'd strut, or fly proudly o'er head.

As my thoughts wander back they unfailingly stop
At the large stately oak overspreading the shop,
Neath whose roof the blacksmith with his coals all aglow,
Plied his skill on such tools as the wedge and grubhoe.
'Twas a pleasant retreat during winter's bleak days
To stand on the forge and enjoy the warm blaze;
See the smith with his tongs clasp the white-heated ore,
And with vigorous strokes make the shop ring and roar.
See the sparkles fly off—broken scales of the crust—
Like diminutive meteors through the thick dust;
How they shot all around through each crevice and chink,
Exciting much mirth as some urchin would shrink.
The hoarse-breathing bellows with round iron flue,
Making hotter the flame with each breath that it blew;
The ring of the anvil as hammers would fall,
The vise and the "trav'ler," the old vat and all;
These often return, let me go where I will—
Welcome spectres of yore, they revisit me still.
Off in front of the shop, on a parallel line,
Stood the ginhouse—a quaint, anti-bellum design,
And here operated the horses and men,
For no modern machinery was utilized then;
No piston and boiler, no furnace and steam,
But plain wooden cogwheels drawn round by the team.

The convivial season of Christmas of old
Is a thing which my fancy delights to behold;
Every needful requirement the mind could suggest
Was fulfilled that that time should give pleasure and rest:
There was wood for the fires—an exhaustless supply,
And the fagots of lightwood fill'd boxes near by;
Every part of the yard must be carefully swept,
And the spacious old dwelling more orderly kept;
Thus things moved along till at length Christmas Eve
Bade the menials quit work till the holidays leave.
Christmas Eve! Oh, what mem'ries well up thro' that tide,
When my sisters and I (one of whom has since died!)
Busied round with our chatter, with never a pause,
'Bout the "goodies" expected from old Santa Claus.
And when through the hours of that still, deathlike lull
We awoke, and realized that our stockings were full.
No one could describe th' inexpressible joy
Of two glad little girls and a glad little boy.

How distinctly remembrance, that lightning of mind,
Takes me back to the room where on Christmas we dined;
The mahogany table with viand and dish
Supplied every craving the palate could wish;
Every guest that was present would praise the rich feast,
Or show his approval by eating at least;
And when from this room in the parlor we went
Merry laughter and talk were enjoy'd to content;
But tiring on this, just for innocent fun,
A table was placed and a game was begun;
They'd give and they'd beg, they would cut and they'd deal,

Interspersing at times laughter's jolly, loud peal,
Until some of the players would gladly exclaim
That they played that time high, low, jack and the game.
As time's ceaseless roll other days brought around
New diversions and sports were successively found,
And no day of the season was dull to me then,
But those days are now gone, they can ne'er come again.

Though a very poor tribute I know I shall pay,
Yet I'll close not these lines without something to say
'Bout the faithful negroes in their cabins close by
All of whom I see now in my memory's eye.
Many a night when the weather was balmy like May
I was oft engaged with negro-children at play;
In the plays "hide the whip," "John Bailey," and "denbase"
We would run one another in liveliest chase;
And to see the dim figures glide round thus at night
Was the *ne plus ultra* of my boyish delight.
And on Sunday also, at some choice rendezvous
The young negroes at home, those from neigh'bring farms too,
Would be busy at play—all the men and the boys—
Making merry the scene with their running and noise.

In these cursory thoughts I have meant to define
Little things which occurred before I was nine;
Near which age of my life I was able to draw
A new sketch of the times—'twas the war.
All the negroes were freed, and the most of them gone

To begin life anew in the era just born.
To a day-school also 'bout this time I was sent,
And I'll never forget what I then underwent;
To be thus torn away from the things I enjoy'd
Was a terror—a torment which greatly annoy'd.
To be pent in a house with my book or my slate,
And deprived at my home of my negro-boy mate;
To recite and recite, and still lessons to get
Was the hardest experience I had seen yet.
'Twas a task so severe that my prejudice ran
Against it from that time until I was a man.
But these wandering thoughts I'll no further extend,
Very few more the lines and I'll be at the end.

Mark the change, if you please, between now and the past!
And, perhaps, there's no one who feels more the contrast
Than myself, when I think of my living alone
At the very same place where I've seen and have known
All the incidents that I have tried to relate;
They occur to my mind, in my heart they create
Melancholy and grief—a sad waste and a void—
Caused by cruel Time who has wrought and destroy'd!
Happy years that are gone, upon you I do dwell!
Dearest scenes of my life, let me bid you farewell!

October 6, 1894.

LINES TO CLAIRE.

(An Acrostic.)

Come gentle Muse, thy presence lend,
Let purest words my tho ıghts attend,
Attune my lyre to music sweet,
Infuse thy spirit true, discreet;
Remove whate'er is insincere,
Evince thyself my patron here.

Renshawe, how beautiful thy name!
Esteem and praise thou too dost claim.
Nature hath done for thee her part—
Stamp'd beauty without gloss of art;
How well her force of art to try
Attests itself in thy soft eye,
Whose pleasing depth and tender light
E'er seen becomes a part of sight.

Now on thy worth—thy moral dues—
Efficient words I cannot use;
With gen'rous attributes of mind,
So purely sweet and sweetly kind,
On these 'twere best some other hand
Meet praise bestow. I never can
Evoke applause for gifts so grand.

November 16, 1894.

ON A BEAUTIFUL YOUNG LADY.

There's an image I know ever round me,
'Tis the image of her I most love,
And its essence so subtle has bound me
As if by some force from above;
Should I go to earth's parts the remotest,
Or sail over old ocean's deep blue,
I am sure the first thing to be noticed
Would be the fair image there too.

All the spouting and sparkling of fountains,
All the soft-gurgling music of rills,
The sublime and the grand of the mountains
In whose presence the soul of man thrills;
The sweet notes of the birds gayly singing,
Tangled forests of vine and of tree,
All the grass and the flowerets springing,
Are not fair as this image to me.

And such beauty thus seen by reflection
In the dim, murky mirror of mind,
Cannot possibly reach that perfection
Which in her own self I could find;
To indulge such a picture ideal
Is a pleasure I'd hate to forego,
But to be with and look at the real
Is the rarest of blessings below.

That my love for this one is sincerer
Than mere meaningless words can convey,
That my heart feels a zeal which is dearer
Is too truly defined to gainsay;
For last night while slumbering and sleeping
I dreamed some one said she must die;
And when I awoke I was weeping,
And my heart it did heave with a sigh.

But the glory which follow'd this vision,
When my sense back again was restored,
Was a foretaste of regions elysian
Where sorrow no more is deplored;
'Twas a feeling of grand satisfaction
Which no pow'r of description can tell,
And the words which soothed my distraction
Were: 'twas only a dream—she is well.

Although burden'd with care and with sorrow,
I'm not yet in the dust of despair;
To-days hope buoys me up for the morrow,
And encouragingly says forbear.
"There is many a pang to pursue me:
They may crush, but they shall not contemn—
They may torture, but shall not subdue me—
'T is of HER that I think—not of them."

Jnly 18 1895.

NIGHTFALL THE LAST OF AUGUST.

She sun goes down behind the hills, he slowly steals away,
And twinkling stars now blooming out announce the parting day;
Soon night her vail o'er earth will spread, her vail of sable hue—
Already leaves and flowers bend beneath the falling dew.

The warbling tenants of the day, in tree or hedge or bush,
Are resting now from all their sports—the shadows bid them hush;
But high upon some lonely perch, 'midst foliage thick and wild,
The owlet sings her dismal song which scares the timid child.

The piping bullbat rising high, the plaintive whippoorwill
Are singing now in other climes—their voice with us is still;
The swallow dares prolong her stay, and now at evening's close,
Without a twitter on she speeds—with whistling wing she goes.

The drowsy bat all day ensconced in his small, lonely lair
Now spreads his leathern wings full length and darkly cleaves the air,
With noiseless flap he skims along beating his silent round—
See! look what circles he describes! look there! he tips the ground.

"The beetle wheels its droning flight," the katydid in trees
Articulates its "katydid" upon the summer breeze;
The rev'ling cricket chirps its song from hearth and underground,
And many a pang or pleasure gone returns with ev'ry sound.

The ugly toad from sleep aroused now winks, and hopping out
From under houses, boards, and clods, begins his nightly bout;
His ugliness we all admit, yet no one e'er destroys
The life of this poor harmless thing, saves snake and cruel boys.

The salient hare with cautious bound and ever list'ning ear
From covert steals so warily his looks suggest his fear;
Full well his instinct teaches him a fact we all should know—
That whatsoe'er's without defense is sought by ev'ry foe.
Now come the sounds, from pastures green and from the dark, cool dells,
Of lowing herds, of bleating sheep, and drowsy-tinkling bells;
And ever and anon is heard the voice of human song,
Or loud halloo, or noisy whoop, echoing far along.

Upon the ear, through stilly air, from many a neighb'ring
yard,
The faithful watch-dog's larum sounds his master's home to
guard;
And oft an interrupting noise against the stillness swells
Where straining close behind the hare the fox-hound loudly
yells.

'Tis at this season of the year—the greater hardships o'er—
The rural occupant enjoys himself as not before;
Nor bloomy spring, nor mellow fall, delightful tho' their
charm,
Has ever giv'n such privilege to him who works the farm.

August 29, 1895.

THE BACHELOR.

The bachelor! the bachelor!
And what, I pray, is he good for?
Nobody on this round earth knows,
But should I an opinion give
Why God lets such a creature live
I'd say: he rounds the sum of woes.

Each phase of life helps form life's chain,
And ev'ry link must bear its strain,
The bachelor is like the swivel;
For round him all earth's evils turn,
And for him there's so much concern
He thinks: well, I do catch the d—l!

August 30, 1895.

THE BLACK-SNAKE AND THE TURTLE.

"Yes I'll go," said the snake,
"Through the fen or the brake—
Anywhere just to leave this location;
It is now my desire
From this place to retire
In order that I get recreation.

"There's no pleasure at home!
I care not what may come
I am busy with this and the other;
I can find not a day
To devote to my play,
It is nothing but trouble and bother!"

This soliloquy said
The young snake raised his head,
And sped on thro' sunshine and thro' shadow,
Till at length he thought best
That he take a short rest
'Midst the cool springing grass of the meadow.

And while here he began
All his prospects to scan—
Many colors of life were presented;
And to tell it in brief
Nothing gave more relief
Than to think his old home was absented.

"I am thankful today
I'm away! I'm away!
I've no wish or desire of returning—
Of the strain and the whirl
Of this busy, wide world
I regret to have been less discerning."

This he said all alone,
And had doubtless gone on
Had he not interrupted a turtle
Who had come from his store,
Which he kept on the shore,
To his berth under grass and wild-myrtle.

Said the turtle to him:
"Why, my friend, you look trim
In that fine flossy suit of prunello;
Notwithstanding I see
Folks of ev'ry degree
I confess I have seen no such fellow."

Complimented this way
There was little delay
In producing in him a conviction
That he'd won a kind friend
Who'd prove kind to the end,
And said so without any restriction.

Now the turtle well knew
The best thing he could do,
After hearing this speech so confiding,
Was to flatter and coax
And employ funny jokes,
Though his real intent he was hiding.

He convinced the young snake
There was much he could make—
That great good in this world did betide him,
And said he: "would you win
You have but to begin,"
And proffer'd his own judgement to guide him.

"The good looks you possess
Accord well with your dress,
And your eye is of pure diamond brightness;
You've a pretty, fine head,
And the first word you said
Convinced me you excel in politeness.

"But look here! I didn't know
Time was running out so—
Little more and the sun will be setting;
Hours and days are so fleet
When our pleasures are sweet—
I hadn't noticed how late it was getting.

"Since 'tis late come with me
Let's repair to yon tree,
I keep there my storehouse of provision,
And whatever you think
Of to eat or to drink
Shall he had," and he spoke with precision.

'Tisn't worth while to allude
To what further ensued,
Save to say there was fondness between them;
With much intimacy
They went off in great glee,
It were funny indeed to have seen them.

Now at last they have come
To the turtle's fine home,
Except that they must cross some deep water;
The snake said: I can't swim."
Said the turtle to him:
"Mount my back I'll transport you in order."

The snake craw'd on the shell
Which but meant a farewell
To himself and his heirs now, forever;
For his strange, living boat
Was soon fast to his throat,
And ate him in a manner quite clever.

MORAL.

Now the moral of this
Is too easy to miss,
'Tis too plain to prevent us from finding
That this clumsy, mean verse
Simply tries to rehearse
The old tale of the axe still a-grinding.

'Tis a lesson also
To the young who will go
From their homes off in search of a better,
Who return sadly wreck'd
And are lost to respect—
For the good of this world a dead letter.

September 10, 1895.

A STRANGE ANSWER.

When I was a child I loved dearly to hear
The stories of ghosts and such tales as affright;
They wrought within me a mysterious fear
Which curdled my blood, but ne'er fail'd to delight.

Sometimes after supper the kitchen I'd seek
To get with the darkies—the family slaves,
And there I might hear any night in the week
Adventurous tales or the legends of graves.

Some sable hero not unfrequently held
A place of importance at these special times,
And one of the tales which they loved much to tell
Was told as here giv'n in the following rhymes:

"There once was a man whom his master had sent
Alone in the woods boards and shingles to rive;
And dreary and wild was the place where he went,
Remote from the highways in which people drive.

"A custom there was with some slave-holding men
To give to their slaves certain work to achieve,
And if they perform'd it before the week's end
The time yet remaining was free to receive.

"Accordingly this slave his work had begun,
And thither he went never stopping to wait;
In four or five days he might have his task done,
Yet though if he did he must toil soon and late.

"One night—'twas the last—he was glad he could say
Completion was near; that although he had stoop'd
And strain'd many an hour he could finish next day;
This said, laid his coat on his arm, and then whoop'd.

"His voice, strong and clear, loudly rang thro' the air,
And pierced the deep gloom all around him so black,
All sounds of the echoes were still ev'rywhere—
But hark! what was that! something answered him back.

"A slight, nervous tremor pass'd over his frame,
For he was alone, and he knew that no men
Lived back in that woods;—but, said he, 'In heav'n's name
Did not some one whoop?'—Then he whooped again.

"Whoo-whoop! came the voice, and the same as before,
Except that 'twas nearer by half a mile's space,
Said he: 'I must hush and not whoop any more,
For surely that's something pursuing my trace.

"He quicken'd his step, but not yet to a run,
His forehead was damp with a cool, chilly sweat
He had not a weapon—a pistol or gun—
And fully two miles must be gone over yet.

"Again came the whoop! 'twas now fearful indeed,
Not farther behind than three-fourths of a mile,
And still coming on with incredible speed
Much louder it grew, and more frantic and wild!

"'Great God!' said the man, and his coat he threw down;
He had not a moment or second to waste;
O'er bushes and logs and the rough, rugged ground
He ran for his home in all possible haste.

"The feeling of fear was now high in his breast,
And higher it rose as for life he rush'd on;
How anxious, how eager, how grimly distressed
He felt as he said to himself—'I am gone.'

"But listen what screaming! and what did it mean—
Such horrible sound now so wildly afloat!—
'Twas a brute's angry cry as he thought he had seen
The man's failen form, but instead 'twas his coat.

"He sprang on the coat and his fury awoke—
How quickly in pieces the garment he'd torn!
And though short was the time which he spent, yet it broke
His swift, savage chase, while the man hurried on.

"The latter now thought as he hasten'd along
That maybe 'twas thus he might 'scape the fierce brute;
He pull'd off his pants which were heavy and strong,
And left them on trail to impede the pursuit.

"The lithe, savage monster soon came upon those,
And tore them up quickly to many a shred;
But missing his prey he now madly arose
To chase the poor man who had gotten ahead.

"Ahead? yes ahead! and why strove he now more?
What lighten'd his heart and new energy gave?
'Twas light beaming out from his own open door
Which seemingly said: 'hurry on, I will save.'

"His strong, manly frame seem'd new vigor to gain,
Hope quicken'd his step, though he felt greater fear!
His sinewy limbs bounded wildly amain,
Because he well knew his pursuer was near.

"But fate whose decree seem'd relentless at first
To spare the rich gift which is loved by all men,
Assumed a new turn, and allow'd him to burst
Into his own house and be safe once again.

"He quickly turn'd round when he'd gotten inside
To slam to the door to secure him within,
When lo! in the light from the room he descried
A huge panther's head, and with horrible grin!"

This tale, though absurd, I still love to recall,
It carries me back to the scenes of the past;
The kitchen, the faces, the fire-place and all
Shall bide in my mem'ry with joy to the last.

October 14, 1895.

AUTUMN SUNLIGHT AFTER FROST.

After frost in the month of October
Is my favorite time of the year,
When the season is tranquil and sober,
And the leaves are all yellow and sear;
When the fields and the forests are richly bedight
In the soft-glowing rays of the autumn sunlight.

After frost comes the fine, bracing weather
Which imparts a fresh feeling and rare,
'Tis delightfully nice altogether—
This exhil'rating, October air;
There's a beauty, a lustre peculiarly bright
In the soft-glowing rays of the autumn sunlight.

After frost when the farmers are trying
To get in their rich harvest of grain
All the beauty of nature is vying
In the verdure, the stream, and the plain;—
These present to the eye a delectable sight
When so brightly lit up by the autumn s nlight.

After frost all the birds that migrated
When the heat of the spring grew too warm
Are again among us reinstated,
Harbingers of the cold, wintry storm;
It is pleasant to see them on perch or in flight,
For they look glad and happy in th' autumn sunlight.

After frost the hickories are dropping
From the boughs of the trees straight and high,
And the squirrels are running and hopping
To gather their winter supply;
And they frisk and they jump like a shadowy sprite
Up and down and around in the autumn sunlight.

After frost there is something inviting
In whatever of nature I see,
And how much I regret that my writing
Fails to tell what I feel within me;
'Tis my soul which alone can attain to the height
Of the transcendent glory of th' autumn sunlight.

October 24, 1895.

SONG OF THE OWL.

De owl sot on de cipus-knee
An' look'd up in de gum,
She said I aint gwine in dat tree
Untel I set here some:
Den bridle de rat an' saddle de cat
Dare's mo' whay dat come f'om.

De owl, she edicated high
An' pooddy too—but grum,
You see her sense in dat big eye
Which do her looks become;
Den bridle de rat an' saddle de cat
Dare' mo' whay dat come f'om.

An' when she 'gin to swell her th'oat
Look out fur some'n to come,
She mash her mouf down on de note
An' make de woods fair hum;
Den bridle de rat an' saddle de cat
Dare's mo' whay dat come f'om.

An' ef she want to hab some fun
You nebber ketch her mum,
In makin' fun she mainest one—
She allers make up some:
Den bridle de rat an' saddle de cat
Dare's mo' whay dat come f'om.

De owl, she light but she aint spry,
An' when she wid her chum
She whoop an' laugh an' drap her eye
Jes like she drunk on rum;
Den bridle de rat an' saddle de cat
No mo' whay dat come f'om.

November 2, 1893.

THE MEETING.

[The following lines were suggested by the fact that call-meetings of a trivial character are usually productive of much talk but of little good, and if indeed any good is accomplished, it generally results from the suggestion of some one from whom it was least expected.]

(A Burlesque.)

A gobbler one morning awoke
To find his back cover'd with snow,
Said he: "Such as this I am sure would provoke
A saint, if he had to fare so.
Why is it I wonder that we
(Addressing the rest that were there)
Just have to sit here all night long in a tree,
Or on a high pole, and the air
So cold it would freeze anything? To my mind
It's caused by the baseness and work of mankind."

"Tut! tut! that is plain," said a hen:
"I find that as old as you are
You know very little indeed about men;
All over this country, or far
Or near, it is said you can't find
One-half the meanness in a hog,
Or anything else, that there is in mankind.
You might ask a horse or a dog
If I am not right; I'll suggest, anyway,
You ask all the fowls just to see what they'll say."

"Well dear," said the gobbler, "indeed
I'm anxious to hear from them all,
And at your suggestion I mean to proceed

At once, ma' am, a meeting to call;
I'll write it as short as I can,
And set forth the time and the place,
Just say we request your opinion of man—
That dastardly villian and base.
Our grievance is bad, 'tis too bad to be borne,
The yoke of the tyrant is all we have worn."

The time was the first set upon,
The place was a long garden walk
Where April the first thirty minutes past one
Would come quite a number to talk.
The rooster, the gander, the drake,
The peacock, the guinea, and all,
Were look'd for that day with no thought of mistake,
As none could be deaf to the call.
And when, sure enough, the glad day did arrive
The adage would say: "They were too thick to thrive."

The rooster, well known on the land,
And ready always for defense,
With proud, haughty bearing walk'd up to the stand
And said it was time to commence.
The crowd being still'd by a rap,
The thing which came next to decide
Was whom they should choose as a suitable chap
To sit in the chair and preside.
The gobbler was thought by the rooster so famed
Without hesitation the gobbler was named.

A second to this came at last,
Then votes on the noes and the ayes,—
The latter received a unanimous cast
Which caused a most pleasant surprise.
Elected, two members arose
To act as escorts to the chair,
And every one present seem'd glad to disclose
The fact that he was to sit there.
The rooster withdrew, when the gobbler averr'd
How grateful he felt for the honor conferr'd.

Now sitting with gavel in hand
The table he rapp'd quick and loud,
Announcing of course that he meant to command
Good order at once in the crowd.
Said he: "Let's to work if you please,
The hours are so swift in their flight
They bear us along as on wings of the bees
Into the dark hive of the night.
No further detention by me I protest,
My views are well known, so let's hear from the rest."

These words, though so few, drew applause,—
A thing which enthusiasm owes,
And presently; after a suitable pause,
The rooster impetuous rose.
Addressing the Chair, he began
In terms of invective the worst;
His hate, his contempt, and his censure of man
Were proof that he wish'd him accurst.
He thought that no creature that stood in life's path
Deserved half so much of the eternal wrath.

Then follow'd the drake and peacock,
And each with strong emphasis said
How sorry he was he was pow'rless to knock
Such scoundrels as man in the head.
A bloodthirsty villian indeed,
Whose life was as mean as could be,—
To give greatest pain and to satisfy greed
Express'd his career to a T.
"I wish," said the drake, "I care not what you think,
In depths of 'Inferno' his soul could now sink."

At this came applause and loud cheers,
Confusion and clamorous noise;
The crowd getting quiet, then came to their ears
The out-of-place words of "Well, boys."
At once every one turn'd to find
Whence words so uncouth could proceed,
When far in the rear—away back there behind
The guinea was standing to read.
He thought by his essay to gain some renown,
But bother'd by laughter, got mad and sat down.

The gander was last to be heard,
And when recognized by the Chair
He said: "I expected to say not a word,
But now I could hardly forbear.
I've listen'd to what you have said,
Attentively too as I could,
And though well aware that the notice I read
Was not at all misunderstood,
Yet surely it puzzles the mind of a goose
To see what we'll gain by the means of abuse.

"According to History you know
'Tis proved we should never be rash,
In righting our wrongs it is best to go slow—
Not carry things down with a crash.
Revenge goes its way without eyes,
Impell'd by the heart's blackest hate;
How deadly its work, how unsafe and unwise,
Arrested, alas, when too late!
I vow (no offense) from what some of you say
Your words are in keeping with this All-Fools day."

The Chairman was struck with this speech,
And cherish'd the wisdom contain'd;
He thought Mister Gander no "Goose," but might teach
The rest how contentment was gain'd.
The others likewise did agree
That anger their judgement had swerved,
And each one confessed that now he could see
'Twas what he had justly deserved.
The meeting adjourn'd, and this thought was impress'd,
That though they had spoken no wrongs were redress'd.

November 27, 1895.

M–O–N–E–Y.

That mammon rules the mind and heart
Of men we plainly see,
The whole is greater than a part
Can never truer be;
No woman, man, or urchin small
Who dwells beneath the sky
Will doubt the love among us all
For m–o–n–e–y.

The aged millionaire will win
Some blushing maiden fair,
While in her soul she loathes the sin
Of making such a pair.
The law of nature she perverts,
We need not question why,
'Tis but the pow'r which man exerts
With m–o–n–e–y.

The handsome, educated boy
Some rich old widow mates,
Her wealth it is he means t' enjoy,
Herself he stoutly hates;
The principle which here we prove,
Let him who can deny,
Is wanton sacrifice of love
For m–o–n–e–y.

What furnishes the rare beefsteak,
Keeps wood and coal for fire?
What gets the wine, the pie, the cake,
And all else we desire?
What cheers the heart, lights up the face,
Seems all to satisfy?
What helps so much in life's hard race?—
It's m–o–n–e–y.

What makes the candidate polite,
The merchant bow so low?
What stirs the farmer day and night,
And makes the doctor go?
What makes the student study late?
What makes the lawyer lie?
What moves all things both small and great?—
It's m–o–n–e–y.

"What is the worth of anything"
(Alas, ignoble blot!)
"But so much money as 'twill bring?"—
Life, honor or what not.
That pure white robe by virtue worn,
Esteem'd and prized so high,
Is oft begrim'd and rent and torn
By m–o–n–e–y.

'Who are not wealthy,' Bulwer says,
'Know not what can be done,
Wealth realizes all our ways,
By it great things are won;
There's felt a granduer when possest
Which might the God's defy;'
For oh! what might, what ease, what rest
In m–o–n–e–y.

"Love rules the camp, the court, the grove,"
Thus Byron quotes the bard;
But says: 'Twere difficult to prove,
(With poetry it's hard.)
But if love don't, why then CASH does:
Without cash all were dry;
The greatest pow'r that ever was
Is m–o–n–e–y.

June 14, 1896.

EPITAPH ON MR. BLANK.

Here lies a man from earth cut loose,
Tho' dead not miss'd, while here no use;
He grew in meanness not in grace,
And now he's gone to t'other place.

June 29, 1896.

EPITAPH ON MRS. BLANK.

This unholy old dame (is there *one* to regret her?)
Was so hateful while here we can never forget her;
Her tongue went the rounds of a measureless orbit
And struck with the force of the pugilist Corbett.
To stop this vile tongue nothing earthly could make her,
So in mercy to us God saw fit He should take her.

July 1; 1896.

THE ROBIN'S SONG.

From the boughs of the trees there's a voice daily ringing,
'Tis the sound of the song which the robin is singing,
And so sweet are his notes I imagine him wooing,
For less sweet might they be if aught else he was doing.
From early in April he's singing so pretty
This rapturous song to his own little Nettie:
Oh my darling, sweet birdie, how fondly I love you,
How gladly my accents to heaven ascend
To that God who in wisdom is ruling above you
To ask Him to keep you, to bless and defend.

When the gray of the dawn the horizon is streaking
On the ear of the sleeper his love-strains are breaking,
When the sun in his glory the heaven is climbing,
With the breath of the morning his voice is still chiming;
At noon and at eve on the twigs he is swinging,
And gushing with love to his Nettie he's singing:
Oh my darling, sweet birdie, how fondly I love you,
How gladly my accents to heaven ascend
To that God who in wisdom is ruling above you
To ask him to keep you, to bless and defend.

Though his nuptials are over and springtime is going,
His sweet, liquid ditty is flowing, is flowing;
Though his tender young nestlings on him are depending
His song he still utters in gladness unending.
The world he makes brighter by warmth of the greeting
Which daily we hear in the song he's repeating:
Oh my darling, sweet birdies, how fondly I love you,
How gladly my accents to heaven ascend
To that God who in wisdom is ruling above you
To ask Him to keep you, to bless and defend.

July 18, 1896.

THE GHOST OF THE ROADSIDE.

On many a page of ancient lore
We're told of ghosts in ghastly gore;
Tradition brings us many a tale
Of those whose spirits weep and wail;
And Holy Writ does not declare
That no such things inhabit air.

Within no castle great and old,
Or dungeon dark, and damp, and cold;
Within no tumbling mansion drear,
Unoccupied for many a year;
Nor where the trees and vines have shut
Almost from sight the mould'ring hut;
Not where the fearless warriors stood

On battle's crimson field of blood;
Not in the graveyard or the jail
Resides the phantom of this tale;
But by the broad and open road
Is where he makes his lone abode.

'Tis said that once in every year,
As twilight's shadows dim the sky,
This apparition will appear
To all who may be passing by;
And strange the sights which there are seen
Of fiery eyes and scowling mien;
Of hollow cheeks unclothed with flesh,
And bloody wounds still running fresh;
Of tongues emitting flame and smoke,
And limbs all dangling, bruised and broke.
In figures tall he often looms,
Or forms of monster beasts assumes;
Presents himself like birds of prey
Who sullen sit beside the way,
And crawling serpents long and gaunt
Add terror to this dismal haunt.

The sounds which at this place are heard
Are all save human speech or word;
As if a secret to withhold
Not anything has yet been told;
But peals of thunder which appall,
The boom of cannon, crash of ball;
The bass of ocean's rolling wave,

The cry of drowning wretch to save;
The groans of death where weapon's gride
Has drawn from man the living tide;
The howling tempest fierce and black,
The roar and splash of cataract;
These all with every horrid sight
In mad confusion there unite.
And others too which less appall,
As those of brutes that shriek and waul,
And those of all domestic fowls,
Of croaking daws and hooting owls,
Add notes of woe the place to fill,
Produced, it seems, by spectral will;
Indeed there's nothing can escape
His pow'r to make, or sound or shape.

However strange these freaks may be
There's one yet stranger to appear:
No sounds you hear, no sights you see
Except within a certain sphere;
And this incloses but a space
A rood's small surface might embrace.
Explosive sounds which rift and rend
Cannot this boundary transcend;
And torch and flame, though bright they shine,
Ne'er penetrate beyond the line.

And who that happens there could guess
The cause of all this vain distress?
'Twere hard for stranger to allege
The reason why, within a hedge

Beside the road—a public way,
There e'er should be such wierd display.
But those who know have often said
'Tis but a spirit of the dead
Whose life, by wicked, murd'rous plot,
Was taken there upon that spot;
For ever since the deed was done
Occurs this strange phenomenon.

And say they too that since the time
Of the commitment of the crime
No efforts have as yet been made,
By friendly hand or public aid,
To ascertain by word or act
The circumstances of the fact;
That he who did the crime commit
In freedom roams unpunished yet.
Hence all who know of this vile death
Are firmly grounded in the faith
That to avenge a deed so black
The spirit has to earth come back,
And will at length the secret give
Why he was not allowed to live;
Expose the cause, the plot, the plan,
The murd'rer's name—the very man,
That his own blood may yet be shed
As retribution for the dead.

September 9, 1896.

HOW THEY KILLED HIM.

Way back in the 60's, perhaps '63,
A steer on the land got hurt in the knee;
And being no 'count my father said:
"Take him and go knock him in the head."

He spoke to his foreman, Frazier by name,
And told Willis too to take part in the game;
And they led him off with a pair of plow lines
To a forest of oaks and scrubby pines.

Their weapon of death was nothing at all
But a mallet of wood or rather a maul,
And this Willis thought a trifling affair,
But Frazier declared 'twould kill a bear.

When in the woods Willis fasten'd the steer,
And "Un Fra" as we call'd him, drew up near;
He planted his feet down firm in the earth
And slung his maul for all he was worth.

Almost as fast as the hail can fall
Down fell the strokes of Un Frazier's maul,
And Willis said every time the maul fell
It bounced and sounded "Who up pel tel."

The steer's head was hard and his skin was thick,
And as Jack Grimes would say lack'd a "dead'nin' lick,"
But Un Fra was old and needed more force,
His lick was not dead'nin' so, of course.

The maul was handed to Willis who
Would endeavor to show what he could do;
He had watched Un Fra, and now at length,
The time was come he could show his strength.

Willis lifted the maul and like a cyclone
It "busted" the skin and broke the bone;
It came with a crash, a fearful jar,
And sounded he said: whooter smep khar."

"Whooter smep khar" and "who up pel tell"
Were the sounds of the licks by which the steer fell,
But Willis, who told it, made it appear
That "whooter smep khar" did the work for the steer.

July 1, 1897.

TO-DAY I'M FORTY-ONE.

It is with pleasure and with pain
I go life's journey o'er again
In pensive retrospection;
For many a flower bright and gay,
And many a thorn beside the way,
I see in recollection.

My earliest years, now far removed,
But still by conscience most approved,
Will ever seem the brightest;
For then my life from day to day
Was naught but glee and sportive play—
'Twas then my cares were lightest.

This morn of life in childhood's May
Soon merges into broader day
Of hope and expectation,
And youth with many a promise bright
Points me to fields of sweet delight
With glowing contemplation.

Youth past and manhood is attain'd,
That age my vision long has strain'd
To see with eager gloating;
But he who fancies this the goal
Where rests in peace the longing soul
On slippery floes is floating.

And now to-day at forty-one,
A bachelor and all alone,
I much deplore my mission
My life is but a synonym
For carking care and troubles grim—
'Tis almost a perdition.

Pain, grief, regret, remorse are mine,
My heart in anguish doth repine
Within this bleeding bosom;
No charm can soothe my aching brain,
No art absolve its bitter pain,
Ah, Death, art thou more grewsome!

July 14, 1897.

THE CHICK AND THE TOAD.

A chick and toad together came
And each the other call'd by name;
'Twas "Howd'ye Chick," "Good morning Frog,"
And thus commenced a dialogue.

At first disposed to gen'ralize,
They spoke of fields and azure skies,
They talk'ed of life, its toils and cares,
And finally their own affairs.

The toad 'gan to fabulate
'Bout how he lived and what he ate,
Said life was sad in all its ways,
And dark had been his brightest days.

"Tis not," said he, "that I rebel
Against the Hand that rules so well,
But let me ask the reason why
If you are happy, why not I?

"The circumstances go to show
That few are equal here below;
Just take for instance you and me,
The diff'rence all can plainly see.

"And hereupon, that you may know
What I have said I think is so,
I'll show by contrast plain and true
How 'tis with me. how 'tis with you.

"At night you go within a keep
And rest you there in peaceful sleep,
Your mother too broods o'er you there
And sweeter makes the rest you share.

"But where am I? ah, that is it!
Upon the cold, cold ground I sit;
No walls of safety round me stand
And danger lurks on ev'ry hand.

"And food to you is often spread,
By man thrice daily you are fed;
Now think of that!—fy! fy! avaunt!
You do not know what 'tis to want.

"But in my case how diff'rent pray!
I often go from day to day
Without a bug or even a fly,
And hunger till I almost die.

"And in our nat'ral gifts I ken
I fall below you ten times ten,
Your features all are smooth and prim,
Your ermine suit looks nice and trim.

"But look at me. You've never seen
Such suit of dingy, motley green;
And no kahau nor porcupine
Has features ugly half as mine.

"And now, Sir Chick, before I close
I'll talk to you about my foes;
To see how they their vengeance wreak
Upon a thing so small and weak.

"The cruel boy with stick or lash
Beats me as if I were trash;
Relentless grinds me with his heel
As if he thought I could not feel.

"And e'en your species when they're grown
Have never mercy to me shown,
They catch and use me as they please,
And take my life by slow degrees.

"My greatest enemy, the snake,
I dread as man would dread the stake,
There's nothing else on this great sphere
Awes me with such keen sense of fear.

"With you these are nonenties,
Of course you have no enemies;
And could I share such happy cheer
I'd want to live for e'er and e'er.

"Now, Mister Chick, I guess you see
That you must needs with me agree;
The truth is plain, I think, in this
Inelegant antithesis."

The chick replied: "I dont contemn
Your words, but yet I must condemn
The truth of those which go to show
That I have not a single foe.

"Why when my days were scarcely five
A hen ate me almost alive,
My head and back so freely bled
She left me on the ground for dead.

"And few the days—yes, very few—
Since a fierce hawk upon me flew,
But slightly caught in his death grip
I wrung myself and gave the slip.

"The fox, the weasel, and the mink
Will eat my flesh, my blood will drink;
The night-hawk perches near my coop
Seeking a chance on me to swoop.

"And man is yet more treacherous still,
He raises me simply to kill;
It seems he likes on me to feed
When broil'd, or baked, or fricaseed.

"And now, Sir Toad, the thought disclaim
That I enjoy such happy frame;
I'll say no more at present, since
What you have heard must needs convince."

"Umph!" said the toad, "I never knew
That life went half so hard with you;
Believe me, sir, 'tis with surprise
I find how wrong was my surmise.

"Well! well! I thought if anyone
Enjoy'd life's pleasures and its fun,
Drank in the sweets, no bitters knew,
That one I surely thought was you.

"And since I am mistaken here
I feel I have no need to fear
To say all creatures here below
Were made to suffer pain and woe."

July 29, 1897.

SHE DON'T LOVE ME.

(Song.)

There's a certain little girl
About whom I daily think,
She's as noble as an earl,
And as pretty as a pink;
She's as sweet as any rose—
Just as sweet as she can be,
And I love her heaven knows,
But she don't love me.

Oh! how glad I'd be to get her,
She's so beauteous to see;
But I wish I'd never met her
Since she don't love me.

All the stars that shine above
In yon high, "intense inane"
Seem to tell me of my Love
Whom my heart desires to gain;
And so sweet the glance she throws
From that eye I love to see
That I love her heaven knows,
But she don't love me.

Oh! how glad I'd be to get her,
She's so beauteous to see;
But I wish I'd never met her
Since she don't love me.

And the lusty, mellow rays
By the moon so gently shed
Are but symbols of the days
I would share when I was wed;
For she's sweet as any rose—
Just as sweet as she can be,
And I love her heaven knows,
But she don't love me.

Oh! how glad I'd be to get her
She's so beauteous to see;
But I wish I'd never met her
Since she don't love me.

July 31, 1897.

AS WHEN HE CANNOT PAY.

If a fellow knows he's call'd a dolt and feels that he's despised,
That he's held by all in disrepute and grossly criticised;
It is certain that such sentiments against him do inveigh,
But they do not make him feel so *small* as when he cannot pay.

If a man who is not much depraved happens a crime to do,
A remorseful conscience aggravates his being through and through;
It will oft appear before his mind and on his spirits weigh,
But it does not make him feel so *small* as when he cannot pay.

If the profligate or debauchee indulge his vices low,
The contempt his betters hold him in of course he needs must know,
But despite the fact that he must see the error of his way
It is doubtful if he feels so *small* as when he cannot pay.

When the drunkard staggers in his walk and falls at length dead drunk,
He will know when reason has returned that lower still he's sunk,
And in shame he'll pledge himself to hold his cravings all at bay,
But he'll not be apt to feel so *small* as when he cannot pay.

Though the swain his tale of love has told his best and dearest girl,
And the doubt he feels about his chance has made his senses whirl;
Though he hears at last from her own lips: "What marry you, sir, nay;"
Even then he does not feel so *small* as when he cannot pay.

If a man's fair bride turns out to be a slattern and a shrew
His humiliation is so great he doesn't know what to do;
He is piqued by her in various ways, he's worried ev'ry day,
But she never makes him feel so *small* as when he cannot pay.

When a jockey meets his fellow-man and banters him to trade,
Very vig'rously he plies his lies until the trade is made;
But alas! he loses in the deal, and if he would but say
It is then he feels *almost* as small as when he cannot pay.

And just so it is with all, I ween—I might go on and on,
But I've said enough, I guess, just now my meaning to have shown;
You may bring your meanness, sin, and shame, and folly all in play,
But they never make you feel so *small* as when you cannot pay.

August 4, 1897.

IS HE THE SAME?

Pythagoras believed that when the soul
The body leaves it transmigrates or goes
In other creatures; well, upon the whole,
The doctrine's strange, and yet nobody knows
But he was right. Man only can suppose
About all things, since he cannot acquaint
Himself with their beginning or their close;
But yet he talks of things that are and a'n't,
Forgetful he's a fool without the least restraint.

Pythagoras was a philosopher,
The first of all that ever used that term,
And notwithstanding this did he not err?
Can we assert him wiser than the worm,
Whose business, it would seem, is but to squirm
Through life, 'bout what's unseen by mortal eye?
He had a notion which he did not affirm—
Just like the ancient author "Turkish Spy"
Who says all things will live again after they die.

I'm not well read, or maybe I could name
Some others whose views with the "Spy's" obtain,
'Tis said John Wesley's thoughts were much the same,
Though this I never did directly gain.
The "Spy" contends that beasts should not be slain,
Alleging they have souls as well as man,
And much more sense, also without his stain
Of guilt,— that awful and infernal ban
Which worse and worse has grown e'er since the world began.

He makes mankind inferior; no doubt
That's right; for man's the meanest thing by far
On earth. There's nothing you can talk about,
From ocean's depths to heaven's highest star,
That strives so hard and willingly to mar
Earth's peace as man. He's the embodiment
Of all that's gross and bad, the strongest bar
'Gainst right and justice. Pity he was sent
Since he is the first work for which God did repent.

As to the life beyond I'm like the Turk,
Although I cannot raise such strong defense
In my support as he. He wrought good work
By force of argument and reason—sense
Such as I never had. 'Tis but pretense
With me to say a word. I do not know
The final destination of the dense
And crowded tribes of earth. 'Twere hard to show
They live again, and yet I think that they ought to.

But thinking's not enough; I must produce
Some reason be it poor. I'll illustrate
My views in a plain way, since the abstruse
Deductions of the learned are too great
For me. In doing this I beg to state
That no two creatures fare alike; one beast
Luxuriates, another starves; the fate
Of some's to suffer want, while others feast,—
The same 'mong birds and all—from biggest to the least.

And Revelation speaks of beasts, I shall
Not say in heav'n, but that's the way it looks;
It's well to call such metaphorical
Or visionary, since, I guess, the crooks
Of Scripture are right hard to straighten. Books
Divine teach us that God is just, and hence
If He be so, if with all things He brooks
No wrong, then it were nothing but nonsense
To say He'll give not all their future recompense,

Since justice is unequal here. The pain
Of some (I mean not men) exceeds the rest
So far that when they die I think their gain
Will be the greater as they're now distressed.
But I'll not go on thus; I've much digress'd
Already. I intended not to scrawl
As I have done; my theme would not suggest
Such lines. The learned names I here recall
Were meant, perhaps, my own vain prating to forestall.

But by the word "forestall" I may not make
My meaning clear. 'Tis better to revise
A little here, in order no mistake
Be made: Names of philosophers and "spies"
Are often sought by fools t' apologize
For their own ignorance—just so with me;
But since the great will talk and theorize
On foolishness, I can by no means see
Why I should not be given the same liberty.

"Is he the same?"—the theme on which I write,
Relates, *insapiently*, to a pet
I had, when a small boy, a kitten white
And clean with spots of gray; I'll ne'er forget
How glad he always seem'd when me he met.
I call'd him Taunch, which was a substitute
For Tom, his real name. And when I'd let
Him sit upon my knee he, although mute,
Show'd an affection which no Stoic could dispute.

We loved each other as devotedly
As child and kitten could. Where'er I went
He seem'd to seek an opportunity
To be there too. But life was never meant
To last, and his, alas! was quickly spent.
A bane for rats of which he ate soon robb'd
Me of the pet on whom my joy was bent;
And oh! how sadly, grievously I sobb'd,
How achingly my heart in painful anguish throbb'd.

The carcass of poor Taunch was ta'en away
And cast upon a lone and grassy field
Where in death's cold and still embrace, he lay
Exposed, unsepultured, and unconceal'd;
But high above him the baldeagle wheel'd,
Unerringly he gazed and swoop'd and bore
Away my little friend on whom he meal'd.
At this my eyes grew dim, my heart it tore
To think that I should see my pet again no more!

Long years since then have pass'd and gone, and what
With life at school and with the busy trade
Which follow'd afterwards, my time has not
Been spent at home. It seems that there is laid
For some an evil force by which they're made
To do what they dislike; I never thought
I'd live alone, no matter where I staid,
And yet, despite it all, stern fate has brought
Me home a bachelor—a life I never sought.

Yes, I return'd four years ago, but not
To meet my kindred as in time that's past;
Familiar ones who once endear'd this spot
Were far removed; some dead, and others cast
Apart o'er this unbounded, wide, and vast
Domain of earth whose realm's a scene of great
And endless changes—changes which come fast.
Returning all was lone and desolate,
But here a Tom-cat lived who since has been my mate.

A friendship warm and true sprang up between
The cat and me. There is a constancy
In brutes which rarely has been known or seen
In man. They're always what they seem to be,
Without pretentious love and enmity.
"Ik Marvel" says the pleasure that we take
In fondling favorite brutes is small, that the
Enjoyment leaves no void when pass'd.' But make
Of them whate'er we wish they do not us forsake.

The foundling I call Kidnus or Tom-cat,
And with me has he staid most faithfully;
And not a rabbit, bird, mole, mouse or rat,
Escapes his vigilance. Chicanery
Is not perhaps improper here, for he,
It seems, does use it skillfully 'mong these
However wary, wild, or quick they be;
Rabbits, and mice and rats he gets with ease,
And not unfrequently the birds among the trees.

But the great likeness which he bears to Taunch
Surprises me. His color—white and gray—
His shape, affections which are true and staunch,
Are all the same. No matter in what way
You look at him—his features, habits, play—
The likeness is exact. *Ne exeat*,
It's Taunch, it's Taunch, sent back with me to stay.—
Socrates nothing knew, I'm worse than that
As all may soon determine by this feline chat.

Is this idea stranger than the one
Pythagoras conceived? Did he not prate
As foolishly, perhaps, as I have done
In these unrhythmic lines about my "mate?"
Well," as I said at first, it's hard to state
With certainty the knowledge or the name
Of things. We never know what we relate;
And who can tell but somewhere 'yond the flame
Of stars I'll learn that Taunch and Kidnus were the same.

February 11, 1898.

VIRLINE.

To view thy charms is but to know
The glory which on earth is found,
T' obtain a glimpse of thee does show
A form with grace and beauty crown'd.

Thy words of warmth and tenderness
Are ever ready to bestow
A cheer to lighten earth's distress,
And render less life's sum of woe.

As the smooth lake more sightly grows
When winds its waters lightly rile,
So thy sweet face more radiant glows
When brighten'd by a rippling smile.

Thy tresses are like menilite,
Thy cheeks are like the ruby rare
Whose beauty forms a part of sight
E'en though thy person be not there.

Thine eye of purest, softest brown
Infuses gladness by its ray,
Its waves of sparkling glances drown
The pangs which on my bosom prey.

Would I could trace within that eye—
That tranquil orb of living light—
A glance whose meaning did imply
Consent that we in love unite.

Could we, those solemn pledges vow'd,
Unite and dwell in love's fair bow'r;
O'ercast by no portentous cloud,
My life were happy from that hour.

It soothes to think that time may bring
A brighter future than the past;
Bright as the glow of sunny spring
When love shall crown my hopes at last.

Virline, sweet girl, thou knowest well
The depth to which my soul is moved—
That strange, unconquerable spell
Which grows in love when most beloved.

Then wilt thou not, dear girl, consent
Our hearts in union to entwine,
Remove that gnawing discontent
Which I must feel till thou art mine?

Ah, yes, thou art too gentle sure,
Too good, humane, and kind, I know;
Too merciful, too sweet and pure
To break the heart which loves thee so.

March, 1898.

BERTHA MAE.

(Air "Departed Days.")

"'Tis night when meditation bids me feel"
There's one to whom my thoughts will stray,
And oh how fondly, eagerly they steal
From me to dear, sweet Bertha Mae.

CHORUS.

A rose she is in mem'ry's garden rare,
In mine she'll bloom and ne'er decay;
For while life lasts she'll ever blossom there,
That sweet fair flower Bertha Mae.

The night of sorrow, howe'er deep its shade,
Bright thoughts of her the gloom dispel,
And when with her how oft I have delay'd
The last and saddest word—farewell.

What is the greatest joy I yet may share,
What will inspire a hope to live?
To hear these words from that sweet angel fair:
My hand and heart to thee I give.

THE FISHING–PARTY.

(A Nursery Tale.)

Long time ago the buzzard said:
"To-day I'll go a-fishing,
The wind is low, the morning red—
Exactly to my wishing.
But yet," quoth he, "there'll be no fun
With no one else to join me;
Br'er Rabbit's one I'll bet upon,
I'll go and try him—dern me."

The rabbit lived a mile or more
Across the growing heather,
But soon the buzzard's at his door,
And talk they there together.
Says he: "Br'er Rabbit, get your pole,
And let's go down and try 'em;
I know they'll bite, and bless your soul!
How lovely 'tis to fry 'em."

The rabbit says: "Good!—very thing!
I want some fish to eat, sir,
And if you get the longest string
I'll then agree to treat, sir."
The buzzard laughed with merry glee,
And said: "You must be funning,
On that you'd better wait and see,
When *fishing* I'm not *running*."

Conversing thus they dig the bait,
And soon are hot and sweating,
When presently from at the gate
They're ask'd: "What are you getting?"
"I'll dog my cat! yonder's Br'er Fox,
Yes, got his pole—he's going;
Make haste, Br'er Rabbit, fill the box—
All hands can have a showing."

Thus spoke the buzzard. Then, with airs,
The fox came up descanting
On such good fortune unawares,
And lots of other ranting.
Says he: "That digging's all no use,
For I have bait a plenty;
Let's go, time's slipping—why, the deuce."
We might have had 'bout twenty."

When all are ready off they rush
Down where the fish are laving,
Where over streams the breezes brush,
And shady limbs are waving.
Arriving there, the old canoe
They push from out the sedges,
The rabbit says: "Get in, you two,
I'll fish around the edges."

The plan seem'd good, they could not see
That further talk was needed;
The boat was rather small for three,
Hence to this plan acceded.
The rabbit then a worm impaled,
And jutting roots he straddled,
While down the stream his comrades sail'd,
As noiselessly they paddled.

The rabbit thinks: "Now go, canoe,
I know you think you'll beat me,
But that's all right—I'll see to you,
Unless my plans defeat me.
My purpose is to spend the day
In rest and peaceful slumber,
But when the first are ta'en away
I'll carry off my number."

Suiting the actions to his words
He then, 'neath willows weeping,
Lay down, and, lull'd by songs of birds,
Was soon so soundly sleeping
That hours,—those bubbles on the stream
Of life's swift flowing river—
Before he waked him from his dream,
Had gone, and gone forever!

The day was waning when from rest
He roused, nor did he tarry,
But of the boatmen went in quest
Lest all his plans miscarry;
He hastes along the winding bank
Near where a beech is standing,
On whose "fantastic roots" and dank
He finds his comrades landing.

He hides hard by within the weeds
To see what they are doing,
When lo! they're stringing fish like beads,
This done, they speak of going.
"Which way, Br'er Buzzard, shall we go?
Which way would you suggest, sir?"
"Really, sir, I hardly know,
But this I think is best, sir."

The buzzard bows direction meant,
Then both of them departed;
The rabbit mark'd the way they went
When up he bounced and started;
He runs around and gets ahead,
Thinks he: "By George! I'll bet 'em
That when they come they'll think I'm dead,
And in that way I'll 'get 'em.'

"But now, suppose they find me out,
How will it be hereafter?
Ah, well, on that I need not doubt,
I'd turn it off in laughter.
And then they will not think it's I,
They'll think it is a stranger;
They'll say he's dead and go on by,
Of course there'll be no danger."

He hears them coming, down he lies
And feigns a death-like habit;
The buzzard sees him, when he cries:
"Hello! here lies a rabbit."
"Tis!" says the fox, "here in this fern,
What think you was the matter?"
"Can't say, but if we had no turn
His flesh should grace a platter."

To carry him they both were fain,
But lack of strength forbore them;
They pass'd when round he went again
And stretch'd himself before them.
When seen, surprised more than at first,
They stood in silent wonder;
Such unexpectedness just burst
All further talk asunder.

They pause, but soon resume the route
Whereon their mental bother
Was high. They walk a half mile out—
When—heav'ns! there lay another.
"Look here!" the fox exclaims, "we're near
Our homes, and what to do, sir,
Is: leave our fish with this hare here
And go for t'other two, sir."

"All right, Br'er Fox,"—and off they snatch,
The very breezes riding;
The artful "hare" then steals their catch
And throws it safe in hiding.
But knowing now that he must "skip"
Since he has stoop'd to *shab it*,
As quick as thought he gives the slip,
And—good-by, Mister Rabbit!

The fox and buzzard miss their find,
And have a sad misgiving
That there is mischief in the wind
As sure as they are living.
The buzzard says: "Oh! by the way!
I might have taken warning
By what I heard that rascal say
'Bout 'longest string' this morning."

He then relates the circumstance;
The fox says: "Did you ever!"
Then here they come with eyes askance,
And in a work all over.
Suspecting what the rabbit's done,
The trick in part detected;
They hurry back when all is gone,
Point-blank as they'd expected!

Lord! Lord! Lord!—how they ripp'd and flounced!
Cut caper and gyration;
The buzzard said: "I'll just be *dounced!*
If this don't beat the nation."
But naught for that the fish were gone,
The idle, lazy "dreamer"
Had all their honest labor won
Like *many* a thievish schemer.

Febrnary 4, 1899.

ADVICE TO GIRLS.

Trust no men-folks when too pleasing,
Better that you'll not them heed,
Spurn their overtures and teasing,
They're the men you seldom need;
They're deceptive in their natures,
Rarely are they what they claim,
Base and vile and sland'rous creatures
Seeking often to defame.

Would you keep unstain'd the vesture
Of your virgin innocence,
Shrink from every smile and gesture
Which should prove but false pretense;
Prize the honor you inherit
High above all wealth and fame,
Let the world behold your merit
In a pure and spotless name.

Can you lose those mem'ries holy
Which make home seem like a heaven,
Seek you now for melancholy
And for sorrow's bitter leaven,
Then let self and social pleasures
Of your life take sole control,
Eat Dead Sea fruit, waste your treasures,
Blasting thus your life and soul.

Gentle maiden, naught is better,
In this life we live below,
Than that you should early fetter
Some man's heart as on you go;
Some strong soul whose early loving
Shall wax stronger with the years,
One true heart that will be proving
Ne'er a cause for grief and tears.

Let your souls grow up in duty
Seeking e'er for God's own light,
You will thus gain grace and beauty
And make life grow sweet and bright;
You will thus see how life's even
Glows with ever bright'ning skies;
Peace and joy are surely given
But to those who thus are wise.

Life grows sweet when truth controls us,
Gilds us o'er with deathless rays,
With white raiment it enfolds us
Blest with God's unfailing grace;
Lifts the soul into a haven
'Yond the arch-enchanter's reach,
Pure as blooms beneath the heaven
Or bright as sea-shells on the beach.

But "the primrose path of dalliance"
Shun as you would certain death,
And be sure no doubtful alliance
Smirch your name by slander's breath.
Wouldst thou to thyself live truly
Anchor safe thy trust in God,
Then dark days shall prove unruly,
Lighter too the chastening rod.

Let the mother in whose travail
Your young eyes first saw the light
Never hear you scorn or cavil
At what she holds just and right;
Strive to aid her in her burden,
For you'll lose her soon at best,
Strive to make yourself her guerdon,
Strive to give her peace and rest.

You, perhaps, may think your escort
All in all the world to you,
But your father's heart a resort
Make when skies grow black and blue;
He has loved you with a loving
That's unspotted, sweet and pure,
So, dear maiden, e'er be proving
That his trust in you is sure.

April 25, 1899.

B. G. W.

Before I have done with my verses and dates
A word let me add on this son of old Gates;
Receive him all people, whoever you be,
No man is more worthy I grant you than he:
Exemplary in life, ever noble in aim,
Square-dealing and just and exempt from all blame.

Great not in the sense of the learned degrees
Of Masters of Arts and your LL. D's;
Of rank in the army, the navy and such—
Distinctions high-sounding and yet not so much;
Moves not among magnates—no, not in this role—
And mines of great wealth are not his to control;
Not these make him great, but true greatness of soul.

Well favor'd is he, and a man of strong mind,
In business, a model, in manners refined;
Lost not in the glare of a millionaire bore,
Less likely to lean to the rich than the poor,
In all his relations, deny it who can,
A pattern he is, and no doubt a "good man."
Methinks you would like this exception to know,
So trace these initials—the names they will show.

April, 1899.

A FARMER'S REVERIE.

(By J. W. M.)

I am sitting here all lonely
By my humble cottage door
Far down below Ahoskie
I hear the railway's roar;
Some freight train is belated
And disturbs the tranquil night,
But the stars begin to glitter
While the moon too adds her light.

Forty years and more have vanished
Since I first beheld the light,
Forty years with many a sorrow
And days when all was bright.
Forty years God bless us, reader,
We are growing sere and old,
And our locks are swiftly bleaching,
Losing fast their tints of gold.

Now my friends, allow a farmer
With ne'er a wife or child
To entreat your good opinion
And a spirit very mild—
As you scan these lucubrations,
Of a bachelor forlorn,
Who at times is sorely puzzled
As to why he e'er was born.

But there comes a brighter prompting,
And it lifts my passing cloud,
For a score of dear companions
On my bookshelves yet do crowd.
There gay poets and romancers
Jostle sages and divines;
Hero kings and great philosophers
In their shining ranks combine.

Thus accompanied I am thankful
That at times some cheerful friends
Help discuss the world's transactions
And its wicked aims and ends.
Thus apart I walk unsullied
And await that coming hour
When we all shall cease to struggle
For either human pomp or power.

My farm gives me little trouble
Save when cotton sells too low;
My tenants endure the sunshine
And stay out when cold winds blow.
The ingleside is my harbor
When e'er I'm thus disposed,
And in this way avoid hardships,
That on many are imposed.

It's true no wife nor children,
Are seen here to cheer my days,
But neither am I troubled
Concerning means and ways
For subsisting and sustaining
Such a household properly;
So no petty cares assail me,
I am thus far wholly free.

But alas! we're ne'er contented
With this our mortal lot;
We seek for what the world has,
And it little matters what;
We struggle till we get it,
Then prize it when 'tis lost;
So contentment is a phantom
And elusive as a ghost.

It is thus that I, a farmer,
And a bachelor unchained,
Can rest in modest comfort
And gratitude unfeigned.
I obey the Tenth Commandment,
And abide the changing years,
I alone of all my household
Here remain where smiles and tears

Were mine in former seasons,
When in childhood I was gay,
And my fair young mother blessed me
With her love by night and day.
Here my father watched my footsteps
As I first began to walk,
And I hear his ringing laughter
As I made essays to talk.

He and my honored grandsire
Both were sleeping long ago,
But their graves are close out yonder,
Where too I soon shall go.
I love to watch the spreading field
In spring-time growing green;
I love to watch the milk-white lambs
Careering o'er the scene.

And the calves, with tails uplifted,
Join in the wild career,
Sure spring-time is the gladsomest
Of all the thronging year.
The cotton fields are all abloom,
And tall wheat bends in waves;
And then from out some apple tree
The robin's sweetest staves

Come ringing full of life and glee,
Till evening breathes of love,
And then in twilight soft and low
Is heard the cooing dove.
The martin's cry with dawn is heard
And awakes bold chanticleer,
While noisy geese and gobblers, too,
Are heard both far and near.

The lowing cows, the mule's loud bray,
With added hound and horn,
Join in with negro plowman's cry
To serenade the morn.
So I a farmer think and live
And take my part in life,
And thank my God the great mad world,
With all its heat and strife,

Though very near, is still afar
With all its wild uproar.
I am as one who lonely treads
Some distant island shore,
And only hears the sounds of woe
While round me all is peace:
I calmly listen to the wails
And cries until they cease.

I stand upon a height and feel
That I at least am safe,
While others waste their little day,
And vainly fret and chafe.
So thus 'tis sweet to have a friend
Disturb my solitude,
To loiter o'er the fields with me
Until the evening's quietude

Drives us in doors. Then late in night
We sit beside the fire,
And then with no disturbance,
We talk until we tire.
The Spanish war and politics,
Of course we ventilate,
But other topics please us more;
We leave the war and State

To commune with sceptered men,
Who from their marble urns
Still rule our spirits and exalt
Each soul until it burns
With wonder, love, and thankfulness
That such men ever stood
As leaders, priests, and prophets
For the human multitude.

Such men are deathless as their deeds,
They lift and guide us still,
And lapsing ages only serve
Their names and fames to swell;
They loom upon the buried past
Like those tombs of mighty kings,
The Pyramids, along the Nile,
Surviving still all other things.

Thus in placid ease I wander
Down my evening plain of life
With no care from wayward childen,
With no sound of scolding wife;
With an heart that trusts the future,
Still unscathed by what is past,
I wait the coming hour
Which shall be of earth my last.

THE FIRST FLY OF THE SEASON.

BY J. W. M.

Persistent fly, no longer try
To share with me my dinner;
With all your eyes, you're still unwise,
You small wrong-headed sinner!
This fruit and cream may doubtless seem
A thing to warrant peril,
But wicked sprite, avaunt my sight!
Or there may be a quarrel.

'Tis plain to see that unto me,
You are one guest too many,
You would not seek my peace to break,
If manners you had any;
Pray grant me voice and my own choice
In what I give a beggar;
And I must scold, freebooter bold,
At this your ceaseless leaguer.

You are so shy, good Mr. Fly,
In other people's business,
I'm sure that you are of a crew
That hails from Massachusetts;
But sir, beware! I do not care
For Boston nor its common;
Your active mind you should confine
To some strong-minded woman.

You buzz and whine around my wine
And o'er the dishes swagger,
With all the grace and brazen face
Of some huge carpet-bagger.
The scallawags have got the bags,
The darkies raise the odors;
So take your nose from out my close
And bum some other borders.

On Brooklyn Heights are your delights—
Haste there and be a preacher,
With dirty hands and broken bands
Along with Parson Beecher;
Yes, insect fair, go anywhere—
I would not be uncivil,
But hear me swear, I would not care
If you went to the devil.

This breezy morn, as I slept on,
Upon my nose you settled;
And cannot yet my foe forget
How I was roused and nettled.
Are dreams and meals and all that steals
The thorns from weary living
To be thus marred and evil-starred
By troubles of your giving?

You bring to me such misery
As Poe found in his raven;
With maddening feet my face you greet
Each dreadful morn and even;
I do not break your cursed neck,
Because I cannot catch you;
Some human bore alone has power,
Small miscreant, to match you

If gift of speech were in your reach,
And you some Blaine-like talker,
My cup were full, another fool,
Might dangle at a halter;

For who would dare such fardels bear
Through all his stifling summers;
I would as soon live in the moon
With none but Sherman's bummers.

But prying fiend, my woes will end,
They will not last forever,
Tho' now so spry and quick of eye,
You can't abide cold weather;
John Frost will come and be your doom,
You long-perplexing trouble;
You'll change your tune and vanish soon,
Like any other bubble.

THE WATER-OAK.

BY J. W. M.

The water-oak, with green vast cloak,
And limbs sent far abroad,
Is standing here, from year to year,
With its shadow on the road.
The ancient stage-way, broad and fair,
That leads to old St. Johns,
Where long ago Ahoskie Ridge
Commenced its first of towns.

Ahoskie Ridge that stretches far,
From Union to Rich Square,
A pleasant haunt where men are strong,
And maidens passing fair;

The glory of its cotton fields,
And breadths of golden grain,
No other region here about
Can rival or attain.

This water-oak was planted here,
And nurtured well by God;
Its mighty shade at noontide rests
Upon the weary road.
The black and twisted limbs are strong,
Wide-sweeping 'neath the sky,
Whereon the pewee hangs her nest,
When summer breezes sigh.

It is a Saul amid its kind,
So regal is its girth,
A perfect acorn must have dropped
To give it such a birth;
Some loving Dryad surely watched
It as it slowly grew
So broad and fair, and many-limbed,
Beneath the arching blue.

There was a time, Oh, long ago!
When it was small and weak,
But now a giant's force would fail
Its fastenings to break;
It grapples deep the earth below
And broadens year by year—
The fairest, proudest tree that grows
In regions far or near.

No clustered palms on eastern waste,
More grateful to the eye,
A lordly monument it seems,
Of ages long passed by;
It lifts its huge and gnarled trunk,
Far upward toward the stars,
And flings defiant arms abroad
To meet fierce winter's wars.

The storm may come in its agony,
And shriek as it hurries by,
The water-oak unharmed and strong,
Beneath the vaulted sky,
Stands like some soul, self-poised and firm,
Assailed by tempters dire—
Fast-anchored in a deathless hope
That cannot fail or tire.

Way-faring men with heat outworn,
Here pause at summer noon,
And gaze aloft, 'mid coolest depths,
While like some deep bassoon,
The bull-frog's heavy bass is heard
From out his sedgy home;
And here at dreamy twilight swells
The bittern's solemn boom.

I loved it in my sunny youth,
It cheered my listless hours—
I loved the pewee hidden deep
Amid its leafy bowers;
It grows in view of that fair home
Where I was bred and born—
The home I fondly cherish still,
Though long from it I'm torn.

And sweet is now the thought of one,
Who oft at eventide
Passed under these thick boughs with me,
Ere she became a bride.
Ah water-oak! can you forget
The grace of such a time?
God bless you long, mine ancient friend,
And this dear love of mine!!

Beneath it stern Cornwallis rode
From Guilford's bloody field,
And then anon it heard the bells
That for peace and freedom peal'd;
And when the eighty years of rest
Had all been fully scored,
Then through its shade the swelling tide
Of civil war has poured.

It heard Matt Ransom when he charged
Through Plymouth's deadly hail,
For even here the storm of sound
Was borne upon the gale;
It heard the thunder of the guns
When Cooke fought all the fleet,
As slowly down the Albemarle
They went in foul retreat.

Alas! and down this very road,
From Appomattox came,
A handful of that noble wreck,
Forever dear to fame;
They came—the worn and weary men,
That Lee had led and loved,
And even this stern water-oak
With such a sight was moved.

Ah, water-oak! Old water-oak!
I love you well and long,
I would that I some fitting praise
Could lift in this my song;
There's not in all this land of ours
A broader fairer tree,
Long may your shadows stretch around
And shelter mine and me!

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